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RehabMove 2018: MOVING TOWARDS AN EXERCISE & MOVEMENT-FRIENDLY ACADEMIC HOSPITAL: THE UMCG LIFESTYLE NAVIGATOR

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Moving towards an exercise & movement-friendly academic hospital: the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator

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Abstract The purpose of this intervention is to create (more) awareness for the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the influence on lifestyle-related diseases. The intervention focuses on patients, visitors, employees and health care professionals within the UMCG. Ultimate goal is to integrate lifestyle counseling into the daily routine of health care professionals. In exploiting the relation between hospital and patient, the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator, a questionnaire-based intervention on four topics was developed and tested. The answers to the questionnaire lead to a tailor-made and personalized lifestyle advice. During the first phase of the intervention 300 participants visited the mobile UMCG Lifestyle Navigator at five outpatient clinics. Evaluation showed an increase in awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle by 74%. Currently, in the second phase, the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator is positioned in a central location in UMCG, open for all patients, visitors and employees. The number of attendants up to now is 422. Furthermore, support amongst the health care professionals is high. Several health care departments within the UMCG have shown interest in collaboration. However, for a successful implementation of lifestyle advice within UMCG a paradigm shift is required. The UMCG Lifestyle Navigator can play an important role in increasing awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Keywords Healthy ageing, prevention, UMCG Lifestyle Navigator, lifestyle intervention

Introduction

At present lifestyle related diseases make up more than 50 percent of the total diseases (often multiple chronic illnesses) which are primarily the effect of physical inactivity, obesity, malnutrition, alcohol/drug abuse and chronic stress. Recent developments emphasize the importance of preventive lifestyle interventions. Overwhelming evidence shows that a healthy lifestyle has positive effects on a general, healthy population, but even so on people with chronic diseases or with physical limitations. Also, from the viewpoint of affordable health care in the near future, attention to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention is required. Therefore, lifestyle interventions (lifestyle medicine) should develop into an integrated part of regular healthcare.

University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) is a major health care institute and has a leading role in the northern region of the Netherlands. Healthy ageing is one of the pillars of UMCG and a prominent theme in research. Purpose of UMCG is to anchor healthy ageing also in patient care, and to emphasize the importance of prevention (fig. 1). With the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator UMCG focuses on (primary and secondary) prevention by means of creation of awareness for a healthy lifestyle amongst patients, visitors and employees.

Adding healthy years to life

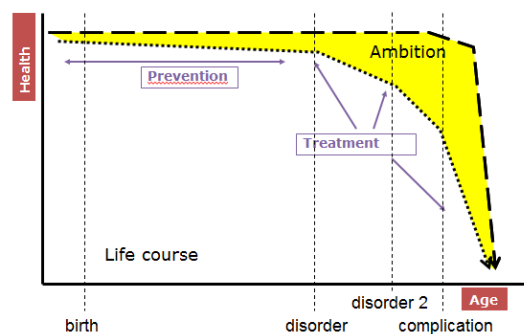


Figure 1: Adding healthy years to life

Methods

The UMCG Lifestyle Navigator is a questionnaire-based lifestyle intervention on four topics (physical activity, nutrition, smoking and stress). The intervention is aimed at making participants (more) aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle to prevent and influence lifestyle-related diseases. By using the natural authority of the doctor, the nurse and other health care professionals as change agents, the importance of a conscious and timely lifestyle adaptation is emphasized. Ultimate goal is to integrate lifestyle counseling into the daily routine of health care professionals.

During the first phase of the development of the intervention, a pilot-study with the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator was carried out at five outpatient clinics in UMCG. A mobile desk (fig. 2) was manned in the waiting room at which participants could fill out the questionnaire (free of costs and anonymous). The answers led to a tailor-made and personalized lifestyle advice, which was printed and handed to the participant and explained by the lifestyle advisor.

Currently, in the second phase of development, the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator is situated at a central location (fig. 3) in UMCG and open for patients as well as for visitors and UMCG employees (4 days a week, 4 hours a day). Regarding patients' attendance we provided the involved medical staff with a lifestyle recipe in order to refer patients to the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator. In addition, at the central location printed information (brochures) and digital information (short instructional movies) are offered.



Figure 2: Mobile desk in waiting room outpatient clinics



Figure 3: UMCG Lifestyle Navigator at central location

Results

During the first phase of the pilot 300 participants visited the mobile UMCG Lifestyle Navigator. Evaluation showed an increase in awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle by 74%. The results of the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator at the central location will be available by the end of this year. At this stage numbers for participation mount up to a total of 422 (fig. 4).

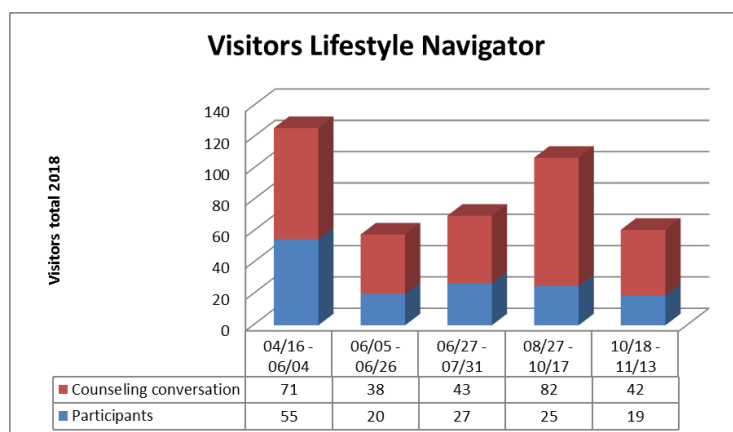


Figure 4: Visitors Lifestyle Navigator

Conclusion

The process of promoting awareness for a healthy lifestyle is a gradual one, for both patients and health care professionals. Next to the departments involved during the first phase of the pilot, other departments have sought collaboration to join the initiative of the UMCG Lifestyle Navigator. Although awareness is growing, using lifestyle advice during the consultation and being confronted with the importance of a lifestyle change needs a paradigm change amongst health care professionals as well as patients. At this stage, for example, time constraints during the consultation limit the use of lifestyle advice. On the other hand, a demand is seen for tailored lifestyle interventions for specific patient groups.

To maintain and optimize the level of health care, focus on primary, secondary and tertiary prevention is a must. With UMCG's focus on healthy ageing, attention for lifestyle is of great importance. The effects of a healthy lifestyle on treatment and recovery can be decisive for the outcome and follow-up of patients health. The UMCG Lifestyle Navigator can play an important role in increasing awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.